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x 776 meaning of 'his spirit', 'their spirit', and so forth; in other words,
 196 where the statement makes it clear that what is being spoken of is Spirit conceived of in relation to particular persons only. We still have to ask, however, in what sense the crocodile is Spirit for these persons.

Since it is difficult to discuss a statement that something which can be observed, crocodile, is something more than what it appears to be when this something more, Spirit, cannot be observed, it is helpful first to consider two examples of Nuer statements that things are something more than they appear to be when both the subject term and the predicate term refer to observable phenomena.

^ 776 When a cucumber is used as a sacrificial victim Nuer speak of
 196 it as an ox. In doing so they are asserting something rather more than that it takes the place of an ox. They do not, of course, say
 782 that cucumbers are oxen, and in speaking of a particular cucumber
 ● 811 as an ox in a sacrificial situation they are only indicating that it may be thought of as an ox in that particular situation; and they act accordingly by performing the sacrificial rites as closely as possible to what happens when the victim is an ox. The resemblance is conceptual, not perceptual. The 'is' rests on qualitative analogy. And the expression is asymmetrical, a cucumber is an ox, but an ox is not a cucumber.

x 776 A rather different example of this way of speaking is the Nuer
 196 assertion that twins are one person and that they are birds.¹ When
 811 they say 'twins are not two persons, they are one person' they are
 845 not saying that they are one individual but that they have a single personality. It is significant that in speaking of the unity of twins they only use the word *ran*, which, like our word 'person', leaves sex, age, and other distinguishing qualities of individuals undefined. They would not say that twins of the same sex were one *dhol*, boy, or one *nyal*, girl, but they do say, whether they are of the same sex or not, that they are one *ran*, person. Their single social personality is something over and above their physical duality, a duality which is evident to the senses and is indicated by the plural form used when speaking of twins and by their treatment in all respects in ordinary social life as two quite distinct individuals. It is only in certain ritual situations, and symbolically,

¹ I have given a more detailed account in 'Customs and Beliefs Relating to Twins among the Nilotic Nuer', *Uganda Journal*, 1936.

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that the unity of twins is expressed, particularly in ceremonies connected with marriage and death, in which the personality undergoes a change. Thus, when the senior of male twins marries, the junior acts with him in the ritual acts he has to perform; female twins ought to be married on the same day; and no mortuary ceremonies are held for twins because, for one reason, one of them cannot be cut off from the living without the other. A woman whose twin brother had died some time before said to Miss Soule, to whom I am indebted for the information, 'Is not his soul still living? I am alive, and we are really children of God.'

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There is no mortuary ceremony even when the second twin dies, and I was told that twins do not attend the mortuary ceremonies held for their dead kinsfolk, nor mourn them, because a twin is a *ran nhial*, a person of the sky or of the above. He is also spoken of as *gat kwoth*, a child of God. These dioscuric descriptions of twins are common to many peoples, but the Nuer are peculiar in holding also that they are birds. They say 'a twin is not a person (*ran*), he is a bird (*diu*)', although, as we have just seen, they assert, in another case, that twins are one person (*ran*). Here they are using the word *ran* in the sense of a human being as distinct from any other creature. The dogma is expressed in various ways. Very often a twin is given the proper name *Dit*, bird, *Gwong*, guineafowl, or *Ngec*, francolin.¹ All Nuer consider it shameful, at any rate for adults, to eat any sort of bird or its eggs, but were a twin to do this it would be much more than shameful. It would be *nueer*, a grave sin, for twins respect (*thek*) birds, because, Nuer say, birds are also twins, and they avoid any sort of contact with them. The equivalence of twins and birds is expressed particularly in connexion with death. When an infant twin dies people say '*ce par*', 'he has flown away', using the word denoting the flight of birds. Infant twins who die, as so often happens, are not buried, as other infants are, but are covered in

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¹ That the names, at least all those I have heard, are taken from birds lowest in the scale of Nuer reckoning requires comment, especially in view of the argument I later develop. It may be due to the Nuer habit of speaking of their relation to God—the birth of twins constitutes such a context—by comparing themselves with lowly things. On the other hand, it may be simply in keeping with the logic of the analogy. Twins belong to the class of the above but are below; just as guineafowl and francolin belong to the class of birds, which as a class is in the category of the above, but are almost earthbound.

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* 776 a reed basket or winnowing-tray and placed in the fork of a tree,
 845 because birds rest in trees. I was told that birds which feed on
 766 carrion would not molest the bodies but would look at their dead
 196 kinsmen—twins and birds are also said to be kin, though the
 ● 811 usage may be regarded as metaphorical—and fly away again.
 When I asked a Nuer whether adult twins would be buried like
 other people he replied 'no, of course not, they are birds and their
 souls go up into the air'. A platform, not used in the normal mode
 of burial, is erected in the grave and a hide placed over it. The
 body is laid on this hide and covered with a second hide. Earth
 is then carefully patted over the upper hide instead of being
 shovelled in quickly, as in the burial of an ordinary person. I was
 told that the corpse is covered with earth lest a hyena eat it and
 afterwards drink at a pool, for men might drink at the same pool
 and die from contamination (*nueer*).

* 776 It is understandable that Nuer draw an analogy between the
 845 multiple hatching of eggs and the dual birth of twins. The analogy
 811 is explicit, and, through an extension of it, the flesh of crocodiles
 [262] and turtles is also forbidden to twins on the ground that these
 creatures too, like birds, lay eggs. Miss Soule once had a girl twin
 in her household who refused fish for the same reason—the only
 case of its kind known to either of us. But the analogy between
 multiple births in birds and men does not adequately explain why
 it is with birds that human twins are equated when there are
 many other creatures which habitually bear several young at the
 same time and in a manner more closely resembling human par-
 turition. It cannot be just multiple birth which leads Nuer to say
 that twins are birds, for these other creatures are not respected by
 twins on that account. The prohibition on eating eggs is clearly
 secondary, and it is extended to include crocodiles and turtles—
 and by Miss Soule's girl fish also—not because they lay eggs but
 because their laying eggs makes them like birds. Moreover, it is
 difficult to understand why a resemblance of the kind should in
 any case be made so much of. The multiple hatching of chicks is
 doubtless a resemblance which greatly strengthens the idea of
 twins being birds, but it is only part of a more complex analogical
 representation which requires to be explained in more general
 terms of Nuer religious thought. A twin, on account of his peculiar
 manner of conception is, though not Spirit himself, a special crea-
 tion, and, therefore, manifestation of Spirit; and when he dies his

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soul goes into the air, to which things associated with Spirit belong. He is a *ran nhial*, a person of the above, whereas an ordinary person is a *ran piny*, a person of the below. A bird, though also not in itself Spirit, belongs by nature to the above and is also what Nuer call, using 'person' metaphorically, a *ran nhial*, a person of the above, and being such is therefore also associated with Spirit. It cannot, of course, be determined for certain whether a twin is said to be a person of the above because he is a bird or whether he is said to be a bird because he is a person of the above, but the connexion in thought between twins and birds is certainly not simply derived from the multiple birth similitude but also, and in my view primarily, from both birds and twins being classed by Nuer as *gaat kwoth*, children of God. Birds are children of God on account of their being in the air, and twins belong to the air on account of their being children of God by the manner of their conception and birth.

It seems odd, if not absurd, to a European when he is told that a twin is a bird as though it were an obvious fact, for Nuer are not saying that a twin is like a bird but that he is a bird. There seems to be a complete contradiction in the statement; and it was precisely on statements of this kind recorded by observers of primitive peoples that Lévy-Bruhl based his theory of the prelogical mentality of these peoples, its chief characteristic being, in his view, that it permits such evident contradictions—that a thing can be what it is and at the same time something altogether different. But, in fact, no contradiction is involved in the statement, which, on the contrary, appears quite sensible, and even true, to one who presents the idea to himself in the Nuer language and within their system of religious thought. He does not then take their statements about twins any more literally than they make and understand them themselves. They are not saying that a twin has a beak, feathers, and so forth. Nor in their everyday relations with twins do Nuer speak of them as birds or act towards them as though they were birds. They treat them as what they are, men and women. But in addition to being men and women they are of a twin-birth, and a twin-birth is a special revelation of Spirit; and Nuer express this special character of twins in the 'twins are birds' formula because twins and birds, though for different reasons, are both associated with Spirit and this makes twins, like birds, 'people of the above' and 'children of God', and hence a bird

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*776 a suitable symbol in which to express the special relationship in
 845 which a twin stands to God. When, therefore, Nuer say that a
 ●811 twin is a bird they are not speaking of either as it appears in the
 flesh. They are speaking of the *anima* of the twin, what they call
 [774] his *tie*, a concept which includes both what we call the personality
 and the soul; and they are speaking of the association birds have
 with Spirit through their ability to enter the realm to which Spirit
 is likened in metaphor and where Nuer think it chiefly is, or may
 be. The formula does not express a dyadic relationship between
 twins and birds but a triadic relationship between twins, birds,
 and God. In respect to God twins and birds have a similar
 character.

*776 It is because Nuer do not make, or take, the statement that
 845 twins are birds in any ordinary sense that they are fully aware
 811 that in ritual relating to twins the actions are a kind of miming.
 766 This is shown in their treatment of the corpse of a twin, for,
 774 according to what they themselves say, what is a bird, the *tie* or
anima, has gone up into the air and what is left and treated—in
 the case of adults platform burial being a convenient alternative
 to disposal in trees—as though it might be a bird is only the *ring*,
 the flesh. It is shown also in the convention that should one of a
 pair of twins die, the child who comes after them takes his place,
 counting as one of them in the various ceremonies twins have to
 perform and respecting birds as rigorously as if he were himself
 a twin, which he is not. The ceremonies have to be performed for
 the benefit of the living twin and their structure and purpose are
 such that there have to be two persons to perform them, so a
 brother or sister acts in the place of the dead.

*776 This discussion of what is meant by the statement that a twin
 845 is a bird is not so far away from the subject of totemism as it might
 811 seem to be, for the stock explanation among the Nuer of a totemic
 relationship is that the ancestor of a lineage and a member of a
 natural species were born twins. The relationship of lineage to
 species is thereby made to derive not only from the closest of all
 possible relationships but also from a special act of divine revela-
 tion; and since the link between a lineage and its totem is the
 tutelary spirit of the lineage associated with the totem it is appro-
 priate that the relationship should be thought of as having come
 about by an event which is a direct manifestation of Spirit.

However, an examination of the Nuer dogma that twins are

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*776 birds was made not on account of totemic relationships com-
 845 monly being explained in terms of twinship but because it was
 ●811 hoped that it would be easier to understand, in the light of any conclusions reached about what is meant by the statement that a twin is a bird, what Nuer mean when they say that some totemic creature, such as the crocodile, is Spirit. Certainly there is here neither the sort of metaphor nor the sort of ellipsis we found in earlier statements. Nor can Nuer be understood to mean that the creature is identical with Spirit, or even with a spirit, Spirit conceived of in a particular totemic refraction. They say quite definitely themselves that it is not; and it is also evident, for Nuer as well as for us, that a material symbol of Spirit cannot, by its very nature, be that which it symbolizes. Nevertheless, though crocodile and Spirit are quite different and unconnected ideas, when the crocodile is for a certain lineage a symbol of their special relationship to God, then in the context of that relationship symbol and what it symbolizes are fused. As in the case of the 'twins are birds' formula, the relation is a triadic one, between a lineage and a natural species and God.

x 776 There are obvious and significant differences between the
 811 creature-Spirit expression and the cucumber-ox and bird-twin expressions. Cucumber, ox, man, and bird are all things which can be known by the senses; but where Spirit is experienced other than in thought it is only in its effects or through material representations of it. We can, therefore, easily see how Nuer regard it as being in, or behind, the crocodile. The subject and predicate terms of the statement that something is Spirit are here no longer held apart by two sets of visible properties. Consequently, while Nuer say that totemic spirits and totems are not the same they sometimes not only speak of, but act towards, a totem as if the spirit were in it. Thus they give some meat of a sacrifice to the lion-spirit to lions, and when they sacrifice to the durra-bird-spirit they address also the birds themselves and tell them that the victim is for them. Nevertheless, they make it clear in talking about their totems that what respect they show for them is on account of their representing the spirits associated with them and not for their own sake.

Another difference is that whereas in the cases of the cucumber-ox and twin-bird expressions the equivalence rests on analogies which are quite obvious even to us once they are pointed out—

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* 776 the cucumber being treated in the ritual of sacrifice as an ox is,
 • 811 and twins and birds both being 'children of God' and also multiple births—analogy is lacking in the creature-Spirit expression. There is no resemblance between the idea of Spirit and that of crocodile. There is nothing in the nature of crocodiles which evokes the idea of Spirit for Nuer, and even for those who respect crocodiles the idea of Spirit is evoked by these creatures because the crocodile is a representation of Spirit in relation to their lineage and not because there is anything crocodile-like about Spirit or Spirit-like about crocodiles. We have passed from observation of resemblances to thought by means of symbols in the sort of way that the crocodile is used as a symbol for Spirit.

We are here faced with the same problem we have been considering earlier, but in what, in the absence of analogical guidance to help us, is a more difficult form. The difficulty is increased by Nuer symbols being taken from an environment unfamiliar to us and one which, even when we familiarize ourselves with it, we experience and evaluate differently. We find it hard to think in terms of crocodiles, snakes, and fig-trees. But reflection shows us that this problem is common to all religious thought, including our own; that a religious symbol has always an intimate association with what it represents, that which brings to the mind with what it brings to the mind. Nuer know that what they see is a crocodile, but since it represents Spirit to some of them it is for those people, when thought of in that way, also what it stands for. The relationship of members of a Nuer lineage to Spirit is represented by a material symbol by which it can be thought of concretely, and therefore as a relationship distinct from the relationships of other lineages to Spirit. What the symbols stand for is the same thing. It is they, and not what they stand for, which differentiate the relationships. There results, when what acts as a symbol is regarded in this way, a fusion between Spirit, as so represented, and its material representation. I would say that then Nuer regard Spirit as being in some way in, or behind, the creature in which in a sense it is beholden.

The problem is even more difficult and complex than I have stated it, because we might say that what are fused are not so much the idea of Spirit and its material representation as the idea of Spirit and the idea of its material representation. It is rather the idea of crocodile than the saurian creatures themselves which

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stands for Spirit to a lineage. If a Nuer cannot see Spirit he like-776
 wise in some cases seldom, if ever, sees his totem; so that it is no 811 ●
 longer a question of a material object symbolizing an idea but of
 one idea symbolizing another. I doubt whether those who respect
 monorchid bulls or waterbuck often see a member of the class or
 species, and children in these and other cases must often be told
 about their totemic attachments before they have seen their
 totems. There must also be Nuer who respect dom palms who
 live in parts of Nuerland to the east of the Nile where this tree
 does not grow.¹ Indeed, I feel confident that one totem, the *lou*
 serpent, a kind of Loch Ness monster, does not exist, and if this
 is so, a totem can be purely imaginary. As this point has some
 theoretical importance for a study of totemism I draw attention
 to a further significant fact. Nuer do not speak of the spirit of
 crocodiles, lions, tamarind-trees, and so on, but always of the spirit
 of crocodile, lion, and tamarind-tree, and they would never say
 that crocodiles, lions, and tamarind-trees were somebody's spirit
 but always that crocodile, lion, and tamarind-tree was his spirit.
 The difference in meaning between the plural and singular usage
 is not, perhaps, very obvious in English but it is both clear and
 vital in Nuer. It is the difference between crocodiles thought of as
 they are seen in rivers and crocodiles thought of as crocodile or as
 the crocodile, as a type of creature, crocodile as a conception. The
 point I am making is exemplified by the story already recorded
 (p. 65) of a man who gave up respecting lions because they killed
 his cattle. He still regarded lion-spirit, Spirit in the representation
 of lion, as a spirit connected with his family. But if a totemic
 relationship may be an ideal one, and has always something of
 the ideal in it, I would still say that Nuer regard Spirit as being

¹ Dr. Lienhardt tells me that a number of lineages in western Dinkaland respect creatures which no longer exist there. A Dinka who travelled with him to other parts of the Southern Sudan was astonished when he first saw his totem, an elephant. Nana Kobina Nketsia IV of Sekondi permits me to say that the first time he saw his totem, the buffalo, was last year in a film at Oxford. Professor I. Schapera tells me that the ruling family of the senior tribe in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the Kwena, have been living for a hundred years in a region where their totem, the crocodile, is unknown (see also what he says in *The Tswana* (International African Institute), 1953, p. 35, and Hugh Ashton, *The Basuto*, 1952, p. 14). Other examples could be cited. It may help us to appreciate the point better if we consider the nearest parallels in our own country. When we think of the lion as our national symbol we do not think of the mangy creatures of the African bush or in zoos. Nor does it incommode us that there are no unicorns and never have been any.

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^x 776 in some way in, or behind, totemic creatures when they think of
 ● 811 them as representations of Spirit.

This must be all the more so with the other spirits of the below, the *bieli*, nature sprites, and the *kulangni*, fetishes. In general much of what has been said in this chapter about the totemic spirits applies to these other spirits also, but there is one important difference. In the statement 'crocodile is their spirit' both terms of the proposition can be thought of quite separately and are indeed so presented in the statement. This is partly because the crocodile is Spirit only for some persons and not for others, and also because, even for those for whom it is Spirit, it also exists in its own right as a reptile and may be so regarded by them without the idea of Spirit being involved. The reptile can be said to be Spirit only because it is something which may represent it and is, therefore, different from it. But in the case of a luminescence, such as will-o'-the-wisp from rotting swamp vegetation, the appearance can scarcely be represented in thought apart from what appears in it. It does not seem to be regarded, as rain may be, as a manifestation of Spirit through a medium which can be said to be sent by, or to be an instrument of, Spirit, but as an emanation of Spirit or as Spirit itself revealed in the light, a theophany like the burning bush in Midian. Nuer speak of it sometimes as the spirit's fire, and of its fire burning. Nor is it, as a crocodile may be, regarded as a representation of Spirit which, being apart from what it represents, can be said to be what it represents. On the contrary, whilst the lights are easily kept apart in the mind from the things on which they are accustomed to appear—swamp vegetation, hippopotamuses, meteorites, and other objects—they are not themselves conceived of as other than Spirit in the form of *bieli* and under that name. They are not something that is thought to exist in its own right but can be said to be Spirit. They are in themselves Spirit, in however lowly a form. Consequently, though they have a special significance for those persons who have acquired a relationship to the *bieli* spirits, they are Spirit also for those not directly concerned with them. Rain and crocodiles are created things with which Spirit may, or may not, be associated, according to circumstances and persons, but a will-o'-the-wisp is a property of Spirit, fractionally conceived of as a spirit of a special kind, and it cannot be thought of in terms other than of Spirit.

So when a Nuer says of a light in the bush that it is Spirit the

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problem we have been considering has changed its form and, at least on first consideration, seems to elude, if not altogether to escape, us. For us the light is a gas arising from swamp vegetation, so that the statement that it is Spirit is of the same kind as the statement that a crocodile is Spirit; and whatever meaning might be attached to the one would be the same for the other. But we cannot say that they are statements of the same kind for Nuer. For them, whereas the crocodile is a thing conceived of separately from Spirit, even though in a certain sense and for certain people it may be said to be Spirit, the phosphorescence is a descent of Spirit in the form of light on to something which is not in any way said to be Spirit, such as a hippopotamus, and on which it may appear at certain times and places and not at other times and places. So we are no longer asking what sense it has for Nuer when one of them says of a thing, which is not for them in itself Spirit, that it is Spirit. We are asking what sense it has for them when one of them says of a thing which has no meaning for them other than an emanation of Spirit that it is Spirit. In the case of the crocodile what is perceived is the reptile, and in certain circumstances it may be conceived of as Spirit for certain persons. In the case of the *bieli* what is perceived may indeed be said to be just light but it can only be conceived of as Spirit, for it has no other name which differentiates it from any other sort of light or fire than *bieli*. When, regarding such a light, Nuer say 'it is Spirit' they are no longer saying that something is something else but are merely giving a name to what is observed; so that here 'it is Spirit' belongs to the same class of statements as 'it is a crocodile', and it might be held that the question we have been examining does not properly arise. Nevertheless, this is not entirely the case, as I will explain later.

What has been said of the lights of the nature sprites can be said also of the little bundles of wood in which the *kulangni*, the fetish spirits, have their abode, but for a different reason. A bundle of wood in which a fetish spirit has its abode is not a symbol of spirit, as a crocodile may be. Nor is it, like the *bieli*, a visible appearance of Spirit. It is a thing where a particular spirit abides. Nevertheless, it must be difficult for a fetish-owner to regard the bundle as being just anything which serves as a lodging for the spirit. It is before the bundle that he makes his offerings and it is the bundle he points at an enemy he wishes the spirit to harm.

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x 776 Moreover, the bundles are fashioned solely as habitations for
 ● 811 spirits and have no significance other than is derived from this
 778 purpose and use. Hence when Nuer say of a fetish-bundle that it
 is Spirit they are not saying that something which also has for
 them a separate meaning as something in itself, which is other
 than Spirit, is something else, namely Spirit, but that something
 which has no meaning of any kind outside its being an abode and
 a material sign of Spirit is Spirit. So the fetish-bundles cannot
 easily be thought of, as can rain or crocodile, either in terms of
 Spirit or in terms of their purely material natures, but only in
 terms of Spirit.

x 776 But though in the case of both the lights and the bundles there
 811 seems to be a more complete and fixed fusion between things and
 Spirit than in the case of the totems, the problem of something being
 something else is still present, though in a more complex, and also a
 more obscure and roundabout, form. Here again, although it can
 be said of a light in the bush or of a fetish-bundle that it is Spirit,
 the statement cannot be reversed. It cannot be said of Spirit that it
 is the light or the bundle, for that would mean to Nuer that Spirit
 in its oneness, conceived of as God, is entirely in the light or the
 bundle, which would make no sense to them. In the statement
 that the light or bundle is Spirit what, therefore, has to be under-
 stood by Spirit is a refraction of Spirit, or a spirit. But, even so,
 the 'is' is not one of identity, for though a phosphorescent light is
 a nature sprite exhibiting itself and is not conceived of as anything
 else, the nature sprite may be thought of independently of the
 light; and though the fetish-bundle may be a meaningless object
 except in relation to the fetish-spirit which occupies it, the spirit
 which occupies it can be thought of independently of it. When
 the light is no longer visible the *biel* sprite is none the less present
 for certain people as their sprite, which is Spirit in relation to
 them as an idea quite apart from its sporadic appearances as a
 light. A fetish-spirit takes its abode in a fetish-bundle of wood
 and it may leave it; and it is also present for certain people as
 Spirit in relation to them as an idea quite apart from its material
 home. In either case the spirits are thought to come, or at some
 time to have come, from above to earth and to be independent, as
 Spirit, of any material forms. Consequently the same nature sprite
 or fetish-spirit can be in different lights or in different bundles at
 the same time, just as an air-spirit can be in different prophets at

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the same time or a totemic spirit can be in any number of members of a species at the same time.

There is a further fact to be taken into consideration. When Nuer speak of lights in the bush or of fetish-bundles as Spirit they normally would not use the generic word for Spirit, *kwoth*, or even its plural and fractionary form *kuth*, spirits. They would say of them that they were *bieli* or *kulangni*. So whilst it is true that *bieli* and *kulangni* are *kuth piny*, spirits of the below, the fact that they are given distinctive class names and that consequently it is possible for Nuer to explain them by saying that they are Spirit or that they are spirits attached to certain persons shows that though they are regarded as Spirit or spirits they are also somehow regarded differently from the way in which Spirit is usually regarded. So the problem here is further complicated by a third term being understood in the statement about something that it is something else: the light is *bieli*, and the *bieli* are Spirit; the bundle is *kulangni*, and the *kulangni* are Spirit. This added complication may be supposed to be due to the fact that though these spirits cannot be said to be identical with things they are more closely bound to them than is the case with other, and higher, spiritual conceptions; and the more Spirit is thought to be bound to visible forms the less it is thought of as Spirit and the more it is thought of in terms of what it is bound to. In other words, there are gradations of the conception of Spirit from pure unattached Spirit to Spirit associated with human, animal, and lifeless objects and more and more closely bound to what it is associated with the farther down the scale one goes. This scale of Spirit, as I have explained earlier, is related to segmentation of the social order and is represented by Nuer by levels of space as well as by levels and degrees of immanence. So when Nuer say of something that it is Spirit we have to consider not only what 'is' means but also what 'Spirit' means. Nevertheless, though the sense of '*kwoth*' varies with the context, the word refers always to something of the same essence; and what is being said, directly or indirectly, in the statements is always the same, that something is that essence.

We can make some contribution towards a solution of the problem in the light of this discussion. When Nuer say of something '*kwoth*', 'it is Spirit', or give it a name of which it can be further said 'that is Spirit', the 'is' does not in all instances have

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* 776 the same connotation. It may be an elliptical statement, signifying
 ● 811 that the thing referred to is a manifestation of Spirit in the sense
 196 of God revealing himself in instruments or effects. Or it may be
 a symbolical statement, signifying that what in itself is not Spirit
 but represents Spirit to certain persons is for these persons Spirit
 in such contexts as direct attention to the symbolic character of
 an object to the exclusion of whatever other qualities it may
 possess. Or it may be a statement signifying something closer to
 identity of the thing spoken of with what it is said to be, Spirit.
 The statements never, however, signify complete identity of any-
 thing with Spirit, because Nuer think of Spirit as something more
 than any of its modes, signs, effects, representations, and so forth,
 and also as something of a different nature from the created things
 which they are. They are not able to define what it is, but when
 it acts within the phenomenal world they say it has come from
 above, where it is conceived to be and whence it is thought to
 descend. Consequently Spirit in any form can be detached in the
 mind from the things said to be it, even if they cannot always be
 so easily detached from the idea of Spirit.

* 776 I can take the analysis no farther; but if it is inconclusive it at
 811 least shows, if it is correct, how wide of the mark have been an-
 124 thropological attempts to explain the kind of statements we have
 been considering. Anthropological explanations display two main
 errors. The first, best exemplified in the writings of Lévy-Bruhl, is
 that when a people say that something is something else which is
 different they are contravening the Law of Contradiction and
 substituting for it a law of their own prelogical way of thinking,
 that of mystical participation.¹ I hope at least to have shown that
 Nuer do not assert identity between the two things. They may say
 that one is the other and in certain situations act towards it as
 though it were that other, or something like it, but they are aware,
 no doubt with varying degrees of awareness, and readily say,
 though with varying degrees of clarity and emphasis, that the
 two things are different. Moreover, it will have been noted that in
 the seemingly equivocal statements we have considered, with per-
 haps one exception, the terms cannot be reversed. The exception

¹ I refer to his earlier writings, in particular *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910) and *La Mentalité primitive* (1922). The second part of his last book, *L'Expérience mystique et les symboles chez les primitifs* (1938), which took account of modern research, is a brilliant discourse on the problems we have been discussing.

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is the statement that twins are birds, because it can also be said that birds are twins. That a hatch of birds are twins is a statement, to which we also can give assent, which does not derive logically from the statement that twins are birds but from a perception independent of that proposition; so it does not concern our problem. Rain may be said to be God but God cannot be said to be rain; a cucumber may be called an ox but an ox cannot be called a cucumber; and the crocodile may be said to be Spirit but Spirit cannot be said to be the crocodile. Consequently these are not statements of identity. They are statements not that something is other than it is but that in a certain sense and in particular contexts something has some extra quality which does not belong to it in its own nature; and this quality is not contrary to, or incompatible with, its nature but something added to it which does not alter what it was but makes it something more, in respect to this quality, than it was. Consequently, no contradiction, it seems to me, is involved in the statements.

Whether the predicate refers to a conception or to a visible object the addition makes the subject equivalent to it in respect to the quality which both now have in common in such contexts as focus the attention on that quality alone. The things referred to are not the same as each other but they are the same in that one respect, and the equivalence, denoted by the copula, is not one of substance but of quality. Consequently we cannot speak here, as Lévy-Bruhl does, of mystical participation, or at any rate not in his sense of the words, because the two things are not thought to be linked by a mystical bond but simply by a symbolic nexus. Therefore, what is done to birds is not thought to affect twins, and if a totem is harmed the spirit of that totem may be offended but it is not harmed by the harm done to the totemic creature.

That the relation between the thing said to be something else and that something else it is said to be is an ideal one is indeed obvious, but anthropological explanations of modes of primitive thought as wide apart as those of Tylor, Max Müller, and Lévy-Bruhl, are based on the assumption that though for us the relation is an ideal one primitive peoples mistake it for a real one; and those anthropologists who sponsor psychological explanations often make the same assumption. This is the second error. If my interpretation is correct, Nuer know very well when they say that a crocodile is Spirit that it is only Spirit in the sense that Spirit is

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x 776 represented to some people by that symbol just as they know very
● 811 well that a cucumber is only an ox in the sense that they treat it
121 as one in sacrifice. That they do not mistake ideal relations for real
ones is shown by many examples in this book: the identification
of a sacrificial spear with that of the ancestor (p. 240), the identi-
fication of man with ox in sacrifice (p. 262), the identification of a
man's herd with that of the ancestor of his clan (p. 258), the identi-
fication of sickness and sin in a sacrificial context (pp. 191-2), and
the identification of the left hand with death and evil (pp. 233-6).
It is shown also in the symbolism of many of their rites, where
their purpose is expressed in mimicry (pp. 231-2).

I think that one reason why it was not readily perceived that
statements that something is something else should not be taken
as matter-of-fact statements is that it was not recognized that they
are made in relation to a third term not mentioned in them but
understood. They are statements, as far as the Nuer are con-
cerned, not that *A* is *B*, but that *A* and *B* have something in com-
mon in relation to *C*. This is evident when we give some thought
to the matter. A cucumber is equivalent to an ox in respect to God
who accepts it in the place of an ox. A crocodile is equivalent to
Spirit only when conceived of as a representation of God to a
lineage. Consequently, though Nuer do not mistake ideal relations
for real ones, an ideal equivalence is none the less true for them,
because within their system of religious thought things are not
just what they appear to be but as they are conceived of in relation
to God.

This implies experience on an imaginative level of thought
where the mind moves in figures, symbols, metaphors, analogies,
and many an elaboration of poetic fancy and language; and an-
other reason why there has been misunderstanding is that the
poetic sense of primitive peoples has not been sufficiently allowed
for, so that it has not been appreciated that what they say is often
to be understood in that sense and not in any ordinary sense. This
is certainly the case with the Nuer, as we see in this chapter and
in many places elsewhere in this book, for example, in their hymns.
In all their poems and songs also they play on words and images
to such an extent that no European can translate them without
commentary from Nuer, and even Nuer themselves cannot always
say what meaning they had for their authors. It is the same with
their cattle- and dance-names, which are chosen both for euphony

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and to express analogies. How Nuer delight in playing with words is also seen in the fun they have in making up tongue-twisters, sentences which are difficult to pronounce without a mistake, and slips of the tongue, usually slips in the presence of mothers-in-law, which turn quite ordinary remarks into obscenities. Lacking plastic and visual arts, the imagination of this sensitive people finds its sole expression in ideas, images, and words.

In this and the last chapter I have attempted to lay bare some features of the Nuer conception of Spirit. We are not asking what Spirit is but what is the Nuer conception of *kwoth*, which we translate 'Spirit'. Since it is a conception that we are inquiring into, our inquiry is an exploration of ideas. In the course of it we have found that whilst Nuer conceive of Spirit as creator and father in the heavens they also think of it in many different representations (what I have called refractions of Spirit) in relation to social groups, categories, and persons. The conception of Spirit has, we found, a social dimension (we can also say, since the statement can be reversed, that the social structure has a spiritual dimension). We found also that Spirit, in the Nuer conception of it, is experienced in signs, media, and symbols through which it is manifested to the senses. Fundamentally, however, this is not a relation of Spirit to things but a relation of Spirit to persons through things, so that, here again, we are ultimately concerned with the relation of God and man, and we have to consider not only what is the God-to-man side of the relationship, to which attention has so far mostly been given, but also the man-to-God side of it, to which I now turn.

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acts, or features of them, we are sometimes compelled to make the attempt, as in this excursus on the spear, by the very emphasis given to them by the culture we are trying to understand. 782

Since we have no spears ourselves and nothing which takes their place in our lives it is difficult for us to appreciate their importance for Nuer. Nuer have no knives, other than that (*ngom*) used for cutting the marks of manhood at initiation, so that their fighting-spears, besides their use as weapons, have to serve where other peoples use knives.¹ A man's fighting-spear (*mut*) is constantly in his hand, forming almost part of him—when he is fighting, hunting, travelling, herding, dancing, displaying himself with his oxen, playing with his comrades, and so on—and when he lays it down it is within his reach; and he is never tired of sharpening and polishing it, for a Nuer is very proud of his spear. In writing a preliminary account of Nuer age-sets many years ago and without reference to the symbolic significance of the spear I wrote that 'one is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon'. Later I came to realize better that in a sense it is animate, for it is an extension and external symbol of the right hand, which stands for the strength, vitality, and virtue of the person. It is a projection of the self, so when a man hurls his spear he cries out either 'my right hand' or the name of the ox with which he is identified. 411

The spear, being an extension of the right hand, stands for all that the right hand stands for, for what is strong, virile, and vital, and consequently for masculinity and hence for the paternal kin and the lineage. Therefore during the discussions about bride-wealth in the byre of the bride's home on her wedding day the bridegroom's people sit on the right side of the byre and the bride's people on the left side. Therefore, also, when the carcasses of oxen sacrificed at marriage ceremonies are divided among the kin, the right fore and hind legs are the portions of the father's brothers and sisters and the left fore and hind legs are the portions of the mother's brothers and sisters. The left side symbolizes evil [826] 811

¹ Being the only thing they have which cuts and is therefore suitable for shaving—their other spears only pierce—the verbal form of the word for fighting-spear, *mut*, besides its meaning of 'to spear' means 'to cut' or 'to shave hair'. When used in the last sense it often refers to ritual shaving of the head, and it may then be used for the whole ceremony of which shaving of the head forms part, as the final marriage ceremony of consummation and ceremonies in connexion with death.

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- 81/ as well as femininity; and there is here a double association, for the female principle is also associated with evil directly, as it were, and not merely through the convergence of femininity and evil in the concept of the left side. Thus we have two opposites, the one comprising the left side, weakness, femininity, and evil, and the other comprising the right side, strength, masculinity, and goodness.¹

That the right side is the good side and the left side the evil side may have been noted in various places in this book. When a fruit or animal is cut in two at sacrifices the left half may be either thrown or given away and only the right half be consumed by the people of the home. It is propitious for a sacrificial ox stabbed with the spear to fall on its right side and unpropitious for it to fall on its left side. A dead man is buried to the left of his hut or windscreen, the side of misfortune. A woman is said to warn her son that when he visits his bride to cohabit with her she may crouch to the right side of the entrance to the hut so that he has to enter by the left side. If she does this he must order her to the other side lest some ill come to him.²

When I was in Nuerland I was only half aware of the significance of left and right for Nuer. When writing this book I found therefore that in several respects my observations, or at any rate what I had recorded, were insufficient to answer certain questions that arose from a further consideration of the left-right polarity. It occurred to me that if the representations were as I supposed them to be then, for example, when Nuer deform the horns of their favourite oxen with which they identify themselves, it should always be the left, and never the right, horn which is trained downwards (Plate XIII). Or again, when Nuer erect the sacred pole, associated with God, the spirits of their lineage, and also with its ghosts, at the entrance to their windcreens, which is their practice, it should always be to the right of the windscreen (taking, in this case, bearings from within it). My recollection,

¹ Among many primitive peoples the slight organic asymmetry between the left hand and the right is made the symbol of absolute moral polarity. Robert Hertz has treated the subject systematically in a brilliant essay, 'La prééminence de la main droite', *Revue philosophique*, xxxiv, 1909 (reprinted in *Mélanges de sociologie religieuse et de folklore*, 1928).

² Left and right are of course relative to the orientation of the person. Thus when a man takes his bearings from the entrance to hut or windscreen what is left from the inside will be right from the outside. I do not think, however, that the point of orientation affects the argument, for it is conventional that in reference to any particular matter the one side is left and the other right.

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- 811 confirmed to some extent by the evidence of my photographs,¹ supported these conclusions, but I asked Dr. Lienhardt and Dr. Howell to verify them, which they have been able to do. It should [513] follow also that a husband sleeps on the right side of the hut and his wife on the left side, and here again Dr. Lienhardt has been good enough to confirm that this is the invariable practice. He has made a further and important observation. I was aware that the [823] west is associated with death and the east with life, but I did not know, till he told me, that east is identified with right and west with left, thus bringing into the left-right polarity the polar representations not only of life and death but also of the cardinal points east and west. I am indebted to Dr. Mary Smith for the further observation that Nuer speak of 'right-handed peace' (*mal me cuec*). They would never speak of left-handed peace.

[826] It is in accord with what we have learnt of the associations with left and right in Nuer thought that Nuer youths should emphasize the contrast between the two hands by putting the left arm out of action altogether for months or even a year or two. This 301 they do by pressing a series of metal rings (*thiau*) into the flesh of the left arm from the wrist upwards so tightly that sores and great pain result and the arm is rendered useless for any purpose other than the display of fortitude and as a passive instrument for the right hand to play upon (Plate XII). A ring on a finger of the right hand is rubbed up and down the discs on the imprisoned left arm to accompany the compliments and endearments of courtship. Such a mutilation is only fully intelligible in terms of symbolic associations. Here the fact that it is only the left horn of favourite [231] oxen which is debased (if the right is trained at all it is trained upwards) is of great significance, for, as will be seen, a man and his favourite ox are identified. What he does to his left hand he does to his ox's left horn: what he does to the ox he does to himself.

826 It is perhaps important to add that Nuer do not think of the left hand as being in a material sense evil. Left-handed persons 811 suffer no disabilities at all and are not considered in other respects as different from other people. Nuer do not, in my experience, attach any importance to the matter, but simply say of a left-

¹ All deformed horns in the photographs are left horns. Some branches in them, however, are to the left of the windcreens, but Nuer erect branches for practical purposes as well as for religious reasons, and I do not think it is possible to distinguish between them by sight.

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826 handed man that his left hand is his right hand.
811 It is the quality of leftness, not the thing that is left, the hand itself, which is significant for them. Similarly, the left half of the severed carcass of a sacrificial animal is not intrinsically evil. It is always eaten by someone. It is bad symbolically, not in itself, and symbolically only in certain contexts or for certain people.

411 It is suggested that the spear as a projection of
885 the right hand symbolizes the vitality of man,
562 the manhood of man with the associations of lineage values that go with it. It is within the logic of the representation that we speak only of men. The spear stands for masculinity. Women do not bear fighting-spears. The spear does not go with femininity. Hence also boys do not bear fighting-spears till at their initiation to manhood they are given them by their fathers. Before this event they are something in between men and women, and this is shown by the fact that they milk the cows, a feminine task that men may not undertake. That neither women nor boys bear spears means that they do not go to war and also that they do not sacrifice. It is not just that a woman may not slaughter the sacrificial victim—it is not, in any case, important who slaughters it—but that, not being able to bear the spear, she cannot make the sacrificial invocation, which is made by the spear in the right hand as well as by the mouth. She can indeed address Spirit at sacrifices, but if she does so she prays (*pal*); she does not invoke (*lam*). This is understandable when we think of the spear as an extension of the right hand and hence as representing strength, masculinity, and goodness. Sacrifice, like war, belongs to that side of life, what we ourselves call the spear-side.¹

¹ I was told that a wife may act as master of ceremonies in her husband's place and shout out the spear-name of his clan at a wedding. This is the *twoc ghok* mentioned later.

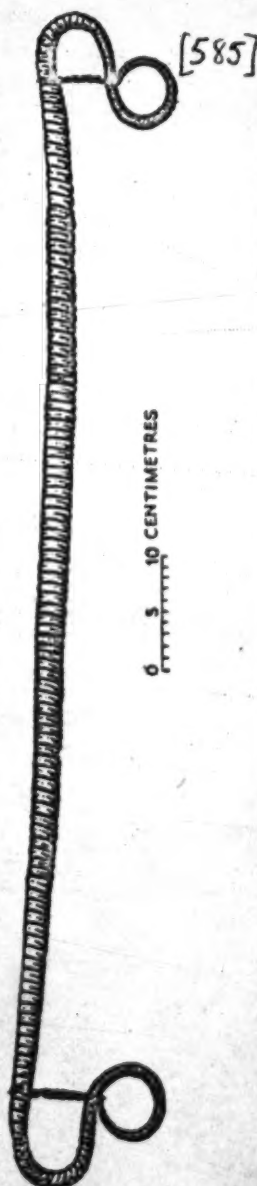


FIG. 4
Instrument used
in wedding in-
vocations